

Washington, DC—Rep. Peter DeFazio today voted to expand and protect America’s treasured public lands. H.R. 146, the public lands omnibus, passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 285 to 140. The landmark legislation combines more than 160 individual measures which were introduced in the previous Congress by both Democrats and Republicans in the House and the Senate. The bill includes new wilderness designations, wild and scenic rivers, National Park units, hiking trails, heritage areas, water projects, and historic preservation initiatives.

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“This bill’s final passage is long overdue. The measure is vital to preserving our precious landscapes, educating generations and supporting local communities, especially in Oregon,” DeFazio said.

“I was particularly pleased that the Copper Salmon Wilderness and the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument provisions were included. The Copper Salmon is truly a rare coastal Oregon gem -- an almost entirely intact ancient forest which supports healthy fish runs --and it is also vital to Oregon’s fishing communities. The Siskiyou National Monument provision will preserve the pristine backcountry and the rare plants and animals that live there so they can be enjoyed for generations to come,” DeFazio continued.

Oregon had five vital provisions included in the legislation:

- The Copper Salmon Wilderness Act designates 9.3 miles of rivers at the headwaters of the North Fork of the Elk River as Wild and Scenic and adds 13,700 acres of new wilderness adjacent to the existing Grassy Knob Wilderness. Renowned among fishermen, the Elk River watershed is one of the last intact watersheds on the southwest Oregon Coast and is widely regarded as Oregon’s last, best, coastal salmon and steelhead stream. Oregon State University researchers have concluded that the Elk River is one of the healthiest habitats in the lower 48 states for anadromous fish, and the stream is home to chinook salmon, winter steelhead, coho salmon, cutthroat trout, and rainbow trout. The watershed also has the distinction as one of the most productive salmon and steelhead rivers outside of Alaska.

- The Cascade Siskiyou National Monument Act establishes a 23,000-acre wilderness area, to be known as the Soda Mountain Wilderness, in the Monument's southern backcountry. Located where Oregon's eastern deserts meet the fir forests, the area contains oak groves, meadows filled with wildflowers, and steep canyons unmatched in the Cascade Range. It is also home to a spectacular variety of rare species of plants and animals such as Roosevelt elk, cougars, golden and bald eagles, goshawks and falcons, whose survival in this region depends upon continued ecological integrity of this area.

- Lewis and Clark Mount Hood Wilderness Act protects almost 127,000 acres around Mount Hood with Wilderness protection and adds almost 80 miles on nine free-flowing stretches of rivers to the National Wild and Scenic River System. It also authorizes a number of high priority, locally supported land exchanges.

- The Oregon Badlands Wilderness Act designates almost 30,000 acres of wilderness 15 miles east of Bend. The wilderness designation comes over two decades after the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recommended the area be preserved;

- The Spring Basin Wilderness Act designates approximately 8,600 acres of BLM land as the Spring Basin Wilderness, overlooking the John Day Wild and Scenic River. The area is important habitat for populations of Mule Deer, Rocky Mountain Elk and many bird species, and offers recreational opportunities for hikers, horseback riders, hunters, botanists and other outdoor enthusiasts